

# Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

## **Beyond guns and buns: Miramont into wellness**

By Kristen Tatti

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FORT COLLINS - Today, it's not enough to go to the gym just to look pumped. The trend is toward exercise routines that achieve overall health, and Miramont Lifestyle Fitness has plans to expand into the growing wellness market.

The company will soon begin design work on a new location in Fort Collins, Miramont Central. The club, slated for a spring opening, will feature an expanded group exercise center and a strong focus on overall health.

Miramont is also teaming up with Loveland-based Rebound Physical Therapy to bring the total wellness package together.

"The industry is working toward a wellness approach," said Cliff Buchholz, owner of Miramont.

Buchholz, who has operated the family-owned fitness center for 29 years, has seen a lot of industry trends. Fourteen years ago, there were hardly any personal trainers at fitness centers, stretching was just for runners, and a club's main draw was the availability of industrial-strength weight-lifting and cardio equipment. Today, Miramont employs about 300 people at its two locations, has ample space set aside for stretching before any workout, and is softening its focus, away from intimidating metallic machines.

The size of the industry continues to grow as well. The number of Americans who visited or belonged to a health club increased 6 percent from 2005 to 2006, with 64.9 million last year, according to a study conducted by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association. The growth in health club patronage represents an increase of nearly 20 percent in five years.

"This industry is changing all of the time, so we're thinking of the future all of the time," Buchholz said.

The new facility will likely be located in the 37,000-square-foot former Stein Mart building at 2211 S. College Ave., near Whole Foods, although terms of a potential lease were still under negotiation at press time. That location would put the new club right between the existing Miramont locations - 3.5 miles from both north and south.

While Miramont Central's new equipment, interactive children's center and fitness studios might be impressive, the physical therapy and wellness center will set it apart.

"We are traditionally an outpatient physical therapy center," Rebound owner Brad Ott explained. The practice sees a lot of sports-related injuries, and many of its patients need to graduate from physical therapy to a workout routine for full recovery.

"We're making a full commitment to the facility there," Ott said.

The center in Miramont will not act as a satellite office for Rebound. It will have its own

dedicated staff to offer not just basic physical therapy services but also massage, acupuncture, sports medicine and possibly even nutrition counseling.

#### Interest in additional services

Rebound Physical Therapy began when Ott took over a physical therapy practice in Loveland in 1997. The practice has grown to eight physical therapists and two trainers, and staff will be added to accommodate the new center.

Ott is seeing, first-hand, the increasing interest in total mind and body wellness.

"We get questions constantly about additional services," he said. The key is providing the variety of wellness services under one roof, using a team approach.

Others have noticed the value in offering a full wellness approach. Club Colorado Fitness opened in Loveland in June. However, the concept for the facility has been years in the making. Owner and CEO Kevin Younger started a physical therapy practice, Back on Track, in 2000. Younger has also consulted with several training programs, including the Women's Olympic Training Program for Cycling.

About three years ago, Younger began researching the industry to see what trends were emerging and what growth opportunities there might be.

"We've meshed three businesses together," he said. "We wanted to really combine all of the aspects."

Club Colorado offers a fitness center, physical therapy and training services. Younger hired California-based Club One to manage the business end of the operation. Club One operates its own facilities in California and acts as a management company for clubs and workplace programs throughout the United States.

Younger acknowledges that the fitness industry is very competitive.

"I think it's one of the more risky ventures to enter in," he said. For Club Colorado, there is an added level of complexity because all three businesses must thrive for the model to be successful.

Younger feels that Club Colorado has its own niche, setting it apart from the rest of its competition. However, it may just be that Club Colorado and Miramont are early adopters of the newest phase of the fitness industry.

#### Wellness is the future

Miramont Central has been in the planning stages for several years, according to Buchholz. The facility will also act as an additional service for existing members of the north and south locations, who will have access to it for no additional charge.

In addition to Miramont Central, Buchholz is working on plans for another facility in the planned 85-acre Presidio development across from Hewlett-Packard Co. on Harmony Road in Fort Collins. The type of facility is still being determined, but Buchholz envisions the center serving the surrounding neighborhood as a swim and fitness center while also catering to local businesses.

"In a year, we'll know more about it," Buchholz said.

One thing that is certain is that the center will include the wellness element.

"We think the future of our industry is in wellness," Buchholz said.

The growth of the industry, especially in Northern Colorado, is less about the increasing number of people and more about the number of people trying to take care of their health.

"Down the road, our growth will not be in more people, but in more people exercising," he added.